An Analysis of English Reading Texts Readability Used for Grade XI Students of SMAN 1 Bukittinggi

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Abstract

This article aimed to investigate the readability of the English reading texts used by the grade XI students of SMAN1 Bukittinggi, to investigate the students' perception toward the English reading texts in their textbook, and to investigate the teachers' perception toward the English reading texts in the students' textbook. The instruments used in this research were the Flesch reading ease formula, questionnaire, and interview. The result of the readability formula showed that there were three of six texts used which were inappropriate to the XI grade students where one of them was categorized as difficult since it was appropriate for college or university students. Meanwhile, the two other texts were categorized as easy for XI grade students because those texts are actually appropriate for students in grade 8th-9th. Based on the students' perception, there were two texts categorized easy, three texts categorized moderate and one text categorized difficult. There were some factors that cause the barrier to comprehending the text. It began with a lack of vocabulary, lack of knowledge about syntactic complexity and the length of the text which was unfair. Then, according to the teachers' perception, there were five texts categorized moderate and there was one text in which both teachers disagreed with. One of them stated it moderate and the other stated it difficult.

Keywords: readability, factors of readability, reading comprehension

Introduction

In EFL instructional program context, reading is claimed as the core and the center of the classroom (Crandal,1995). It is because most of the activities of students in learning English are conducted through reading. Besides, reading plays a very crucial role for students in comprehending any information that they get during following the process of teaching and learning. It is reasonable since most of the learning materials used by the students are in the form of printed material. This condition forces the students to have a good ability in reading. The more capable students in reading, the more comprehensive information they get.

This idea is supported by Urquhart&Weir in Grabe (2010) by stating that "reading is the process of receiving and interpreting information encoded in language form via the medium of print."Through reading, the students get information, meaning and beneficial insight related to their study. So, there is a kind of constructive interaction that is built up between the reader and the writer during the process of reading in order to have a similar understanding among them. This idea is supported by Crandall (1995) by stating that during the process of reading, the reader does two things; process information and constructs the meaning of the text in order to get the writer's purpose/idea in the text.

Many students find the reading activity is a tough one. As a result, most of the students do not understand comprehensively what they are reading. It is in line with Fulcher's (1997) argument which says that the students' comprehension will be obstructed if they face some difficulties in reading a text. There are some factors that cause a reading text is difficult to be comprehended. Those factors can be categorized into two groups; linguistics and non-linguistics factors. Linguistics factors deal with the length and complexity of sentences, the choice of words, coherence, the cohesiveness of sentences and etc. Meanwhile, non-linguistics factors deal with motivation, graph or pictures in the text, font size and etc. So, teachers should take these factors into account in choosing reading materials for their students.

The choice will have a great impact on the success of the teaching itself. According to Bacon and Finneman (1990), the level of appropriateness of reading material determines the students' respond or attitude in following the process of teaching and learning. If the students feel the materials are too difficult, entthey will be frustrating and get lose their confidence to complete the exercises. In turn, if the materials are too easy, the learners will get bored and feel unchallenged. Teachers, in this case, are expected to choose the appropriate materials which are on their students' level of ability and of course will bring benefit for their study.

Based on an informal interview with the English teachers who teach at grade XI in SMAN 1 Bukittinggi, it was found that there are some texts in the textbook that are categorized difficult for the students. Thus, students could not comprehend them fully. The problems are caused by the complexity of sentences in the text and also the choice of words. Some sentences in the text have complicated or complex structures; so the students find them difficult to be comprehended. Besides, the usage of some difficult words in texts makes the process of understanding the text becomes hard. Regarding this phenomenon, the researcher has a great interest to conduct research on investigating whether the reading materials appropriate or not with the students' level ability. It is important to make sure that the reading materials used by the teachers are readable for the students so that they will be understood easily by the students.

In determining the appropriateness of the reading materials with the students' level ability, it is used readability. According to Fulcher (1997), readability is an important consideration to provide information about the suitability of a given text for pedagogical purposes. It is used to measure the easiness of some paragraphs to be read and understood (Richards, 1992). So, the result of the analysis can be used as a reference for the teachers about what should they do. There are some methods that can be used to measure the readability of reading texts. Those methods are the readability formula and the cloze procedure test. Among the two, the readability formula is the most popular and simple method in determining readability. According to Fry (2002) readability formula, regarded to its pros and cons, is still widely used by many researchers and educators since the technique is simple and objective.

Some people argue that this such research is not important or even useless. This argument relies on the assumption that since the reading texts used are taken from the textbook written officially by the experts of standardized and qualified institutions, of course, they fulfill the criteria. Unfortunately, this assumption is not absolutely correct. Angga (2017) for example, investigated the readability of the textbook Bahasa Inggris for grade X published by the ministry of national education. The findings of her research were there were three reading texts among sixteen invalid because they fell in the shaded area. Meanwhile, the range of the reading texts was too wide (from grade level 2 to 17+). Then, there was inconsistency in the grade level of the texts where some texts were categorized too easy and some others were too difficult. The conclusion of this research was the textbook is suitable for grade level 9 of EFL students. Then, Syarif et al.(2017) conducted research on readability texts in the textbook Look Ahead grade XII published by Erlangga. The finding of the research was the reading texts in the textbook do not fulfill the criteria which means that the textbook is not suitable for the XII grade students. The other one is Rohmatillah (2015) did research on measuring the readability of texts in the textbook entitled English Alive for grade X published by Yudhistira. The finding of the research was only five texts from sixteen texts that were relevant or appropriate for the students of grade X at senior high school.

By referring to those findings above, it is very important and essential to conduct this such research. It is hoped that the finding of the research can be a reference for the teacher in teaching reading in the classroom. There are some actions that a teacher can do regarded to the reading material; adapt, adopt or modified the texts in order to make the texts appropriate with the students' level of ability in reading.

Method

This research is categorized as descriptive-quantitative research. It is classified as descriptive since it describes a phenomenon as it is. It is supported by Mc Millan (1992) by stating that " A descriptive study simply describes a phenomenon, and it is usually in the form of statistics such as frequencies, or percentages, averages, and sometimes variability. In line with this Gay and Airasian (2000) state that descriptive research determines and describes the things are. The purpose of this research is to obtain information about the readability reading texts used by the grade XI students of SMAN 1 Bukittinggi. Meanwhile, since the data in this research are numerical, this research also categorized as quantitative research. This idea is supported by Gay et.al (2009) by stating that quantitative research is the Collection and analysis of numerical data to describe, explain, predict, or control phenomena of interest. By these references, it can be concluded that this research is descriptive-quantitative research.

This research was conducted in SMAN 1 Bukittinggi which is located on Jl. Syech Jamil Jambek No.36 Pakan Kurai, Guguk Panjang, Bukittinggi city. The researcher analyzed the readability of reading passages used by the teachers and students in the classroom at grade XI for the year of 2018/2019. SMAN 1 Bukittinggi was selected as an institutional subject since it was one of the "Sekolah Rujukan" which means that it was fulfilled the eight standards of the national standard of education. This school has standardized quality in all aspects stated by the ministry of national education.

The source of the data are documents, students, and teachers. The document was English reading texts taken from the English textbook. The textbook used was "Bahasa Inggris" for Senior High School student grade XI published by the ministry of national education. This book was chosen because it

was recommended by the national ministry of education for the students and also for the teachers. For the students, they were given questionnaires in order to know their perception about the reading texts they use. The interview was also used as the source of data where the interview was conducted to the students and also to the teachers. There were two teachers who taught English in grade XI whose age range 45-57. They had more than fifteen years of teaching experience in teaching English in high school.

There are 10 classes of grade XI students year 2018/2019 which were divided into science (IPA) and social science (IPS) groups in SMAN 1 Bukittinggi. The science groups consist of 8 classes and the social science consists of 2 classes. The population of students could be described in the following table below:

Table 1. Population of the research

No	Class	Total Students
1	XI IPA 1	35
2	XI IPA 2	35
3	XI IPA 3	36
4	XI IPA 4	34
5	XI IPA 5	36
6	XI IPA 6	35
7	XI IPA 7	36
8	XI IPA 8	36
9	XI IPS 1	32
10	XI IPS 2	33
Total	10	348

Since the number of students was large, the researcher referred to the theory stated by Arikunto (2005) which says that if there are several hundreds of population in the study, it is suggested to take 25-30% of the sample. Besides, the number of classes large enough so the researcher applied cluster random sampling in determining the sample of the research. Among the ten classes, the researcher took 3 classes (30%) of the population which included 100 students of class XI. The random sampling was used to identify 3 classes among the ten classes to give an equal chance of selection of the population. A lottery was drawn to each of the class and those students drawn were given questionnaires to be filled. The chosen classes were XI IPA 6, XI IPA 8, and XI IPS 2. The questionnaire was given to the sample of the population (three classes) and the interview was conducted to both of the teachers and nine students samples. In determining the student's sample for the interview, the researcher used purposive sampling. In this method, the sample was determined based on the reading score of the students in the chosen classes; it began from the highest score, the moderate and the lowest one. It was intended to gather information from the different level ability of the students in those classes. So, in each class, there were three samples and the total number of samples was nine students.

In this research, the researcher employed four kinds of instruments in collecting qualitative and quantitative data. Those instruments were the Flesch reading ease formula, questionnaire, interview, and Instrument validation. Each of these instruments could be described as follow:

The Flesch Reading Ease Formula

is a tool used to analyze the readability of reading texts in the textbook? All of the reading texts were analyzed by using the Flesch reading ease formula. This formula is designed to compute the readability of a text by counting the average numbers of syllables per word and the average number of words per sentence. So, this application was used in order to do the process of readability analysis efficiently and effectively. The score of this analysis was range from 0 to 100; where these scores indicated the level of difficulty of the texts. The text is judged difficult if its score is low. In turn, the text is claimed easily if its score is high.

Table 2. Criteria of Scores

Score	Difficult level	Reading Grade
0-30	Very Difficult	College graduate
30-50	Difficult	13th to 16th grade (college)
50-60	Fairly Difficult	10th to 12th grade
60-70	Standard	8th to 9th grade
70-80	Fairly Easy	7th grade
80-90	Easy	6th grade
90-100	Very Easy	5th grade

Questionnaire

The questionnaire was used to discover the students' perception of the reading texts they used in the classroom. According to Mc Millan and Schumacer (2001), a questionnaire is a common technique for collecting data and it is used to elicit reactions, attitudes, or beliefs. This idea is supported by Brown (1997) which stated that a questionnaire is "any written instrument that presents participants with a series of questions or statements to which they should react either by selecting from existing possibilities or writing out their answers." Regarding the analysis of the students' perception of the reading texts, the researcher formulated the questionnaire based on the theory suggested by Day (1994, adapted in Sari, 2015). The questionnaire was like the following:

Table. 3. Questionnaire of Text Readability

Indicators	Sub-Indicators	Item number	Type of test
1. Lexical knowledge	1. Familiarity of the words	1 2	
2. Background knowledge	1. Topic	3 4	
3. Syntactic Appropriateness	1. Grammatical construction 2. Syntactic complexity	5 6 7	
4. Organization	1. Rhetorical organization 2. Clarity organization	8 9	Likert Scale
5. Discourse Phenomena	1. Arrangement of topic and comment 2. Cohesive 3. Coherence	10 11 12	
6. Length of the text	1. Length of the text 2. Time allocation	14	

Interview

The third instrument to get the data was interview guide that was used to collect qualitative data. This interview was conducted in order to gain deeper and specific information related to the students' perception towards the reading texts. De Marrais (2004) defines an interview as a process in which a researcher and participant have a conversation about issues regarding a research study. It is intended to provide additional information missing in observation (Maxwell, 1996). In order to get more valid data, the researche conducted interview towards the students and also to the teachers. It was conducted in an informal situation in order to make the informants relax and felt comfortable during the interview.

Instrument Validation

The last tool was instrument validation. It was intended to validate those instruments above where it could be divided into two kinds of validities; content and construct validity. In order to check the construct validity of the instrument, the researcher adapted the indicators of instruments with the topic of the research and the theories supported. Meanwhile, to see the content validity of the instruments, the researcher consulted the expert to make sure whether the instruments were valid and appropriate or not with this such research.

The researcher did some steps in collecting the data in this research. First, he applied the flesch reading ease formula to determine the readability level of the text. Then, he distributed questionnaires to be

filled by the respondents (100 students) in order to get their perceptions towards the reading texts . After that, he managed interview to 9 of 100 students and also to the two teachers to get more comprehensive information that passing by the questionnaire

The data in this research were analyzed through the following steps:
1. The data of the readability texts were counted by using the flesch reading ease formula program. The process of counting would result the readability level of each text where the score of the text was interpreted based on the following table.

Table 4. Classification of reading score. Source : (Dubay,2004)

No.	Scale	Symbol	Score
1.	Strongly agree	SA	5
2.	Agree	A	4
3.	Undecided	U	3
4.	Disagree	D	2
5.	Strongly Disagree	SD	1

2. Then,the researcher counted the score for each item of questions from questionnaire manually by using Likert scale scoring. The scale of this choice can be stated as follows:

The next step was calculating the average score of each item by using formula proposed by Sudjana (2001). The formula can be stated as follows:

$$\bar{X} = \frac{f}{N} \times 100$$

Where :
X   = mean score (average grade)
f   = number of respondents
N   = the total respondent's grade

After getting the average score for each indicator, the researcher converted those scores into the description. The description could be seen in the table below:

Table 5. Description of Readability Score

Average score	Description
4.01-5.00	Excellent
3.01-4.00	Very good
2.01-3.00	Good
1.01-2.00	Poor
0.00-1.00	Very poor

Adapted from Vgot (in Sari,2015)

3. Then, the data from interview, both students and teachers, were used to get more information about the students' and teachers' perception towards the reading texts.
4. The last step was drawing conclusion whether the texts were appropriate or not to the level of students. This part also explained how perception of the students of SMAN 1 Bukittinggi grade XI and the teachers towards the reading texts they used. In short, the conclusion answered the research questions stated previously.

Findings and Discussion

The findings of this research can be elaborated as follow. First, the readability of some texts that are used by the XI grade students of SMAN 1 Bukittinggi was bad. This judgement derives from the result of the flesch ease readability formula analysis towards the reading texts used by the students. The readability level of three texts used by the students is not appropriate with the level of the students' grade. 1of 3 texts (text 6) is categorized more difficult for the students because it is actually appropriate for college students or university students. Meanwhile, the 2 others (text 1 and 4) are categorized easier for the students because they are appropriate for 8th-9th grade students. Then, the 3 others (2, 3 and 5) are categorized appropriate for the students.

Then, when the result of the flesch ease readability formula above compared with the result of the questionnaire, it is found the several things. First, the text 6 surprisingly, according to the students' perception, is not a difficult text which means that it has good readability. It can be seen from the result of the questionnaire where all of the sub factors of text readability score are very good and even there is one sub factor has excellent description. In line with this, the text 1 and 4 also have good readability which means that these texts can be comprehended by the students. It is described by the all of the sub factors of readability text where the descriptions are ranged from good to excellent; none of sub factors has poor description. These results actually show something that should have to because these texts are categorized easy since they are below the students' level reading grade.

Furthermore, the last three texts (2, 3, 5) are also categorized having good readability since all of the texts' sub factors of readability have good criteria and even some of them have excellent criteria. These results show that these texts are appropriate with the students. So, the result of the flesch ease readability formula is in line with the result of the students' perception.

Second, based on the interview with the students and the teachers, it can be stated that there are some perceptions appear among them regarded to the readability of the reading texts. It begins with easy, moderate and even difficult. Text 1 and text 3 are categorized as the easiest texts because those text were stated as easy texts by 6 students for each of the text; so total numbers are 12. When this perception is compared with the result of the flesch ease readability formula, it can be seen that text 1 should be easy for the students because it is actually appropriate for the 8th-9th grade level students. So, it is reasonable when there is no student who stated the text is difficult to comprehend. A quite different condition appears at the text 3 where according to the flesch ease readability formula this text is categorized as fairly difficult which means it is appropriate for the students' reading grade level but the students' perception vary one to another. It begins with easy (6 students), moderate (2 students) and even difficult (1 student). Text 5 was stated easy by 4 students, text 2 was stated easy by 3 students and text 6 was claimed easy by 1 student. Especially for the text 4, there is no student who stated it as an easy text. So, the range judgement of the text 4 is moderate and difficult.

Then, the text 2 and text 6 are categorized as the most moderate reading text since there were 6 students for each text among 9 who mentioned them as moderate text to comprehend. Especially for the text 2, the students' perception range is easy to moderate; there is no student who mentioned it as a difficult text. These perceptions are reasonable since the result of the flesch ease readability formula mentioned the text as fairly difficult which means that the text is appropriate for the students. On the other hand, the text 6 has more varied perception than text2. Eventhough the majority students stated it moderate, there is 1 student mentioned it easy and there are 2 students stated it difficult. Surprisingly, this text, according to the flesch ease readability formula, is actually categorized difficult and it is appropriate for college students. So, it is clearly understood that the text has supposed to be harder for the students, but , in fact, it is moderate for most of the students.

The most difficult text based on the students' perception is text 4 where there are 6 students among 9 who mentioned it as a tough text to comprehend. Meanwhile, the 3 others mentioned the text as moderate. These perceptions are also a surprising thing since the text, according to the flesch ease readability formula, is actually categorized standard average which means it is appropriate for the grade 8th-9th EFL students. The text should have been easy for the students, but, as a matter of fact, most of the students stated the text as a difficult one. Through interview, the researcher finds the reasons why this text is claimed difficult by the students where most of them stated that they did not recognize most of vocabularies in the text, grammar used in the text is complicated enough where there are a lot of compound sentences found, conjunction and transition used are limited in the text so that those are not really helpful for the students, and 8 among 9 students claimed the text is quite long.

Furthermore, according to the teachers' perception, it is found that both of them stated that text 1,2,3,5 and 6 were categorized moderate for the students. They had a different perception regarding to the text 4 where the first teacher stated the text was categorized moderate but the second teacher claimed the text was difficult for the students. The reasons that support the first teacher perception are there are only some limited vocabularies that are not recognized by the students, topic was recognized well, grammar used was in accordance with the students' grade level, conjunction and transition were helpful for the students, and the length of the text was in accordance with the students' grade level. The second teacher, on the other hand, also proposed some reasons to back up his perception. It begins with there were some vocabularies that were inappropriate with the students' grade level, the grammar used were not fully understood by the students, and the usage of conjunction and transition were not fully helpful for the students in comprehending the text.

Referring to the findings above, there are some issues that can be discussed in this case. First, there are two texts (text 1 and 4) used for the students which should have been easier for the students because the texts actually appropriate for the students who have lower grade than them that is grade 8th-9th. It means that

the 11th grade students should have comprehended the text easily. After having been given the questionnaire, the result of text 1 and 4 showed positive result where all of the sub factors of readability both of the texts range good to excellent. These indicate that the students could comprehend the text easily. However, these results are quite different compared with the result of the students' and the teachers' interview.

For the text 1, majority of the students stated that it is an easy text so they could comprehend the text. The reasons stated by the students to support their judgement are familiarity with the topic, recognized most of vocabularies and the length of the text which is categorized short. This finding is in line with Rezaee and Norouzi's (2011) finding where there is a significant correlation between readability of reading text with the learner's comprehension. It means that if a learner is given an appropriate text with his/her grade level, he/she will be able to comprehend the text. Regarded to the text 4, there is a kind of mismatch between the result of the flesch ease readability formula with the students' perception. The text should have been easy for the students, but, in fact, this text is actually the most difficult one. So, the students must have problem related to the text readability. Through interview, it is found that there are some aspects that influenced the students's problem. It begins with lack of vocabulary mastery, complicated grammar used, conjucntion and transition less helpful and the length of the text which is unfair for the students.

Regarded to the vocabulary mastery, majority students among the 9 stated that there were many difficult words found in the text because they did not recognize them . This statement was also supported by one of the teacher who mentioned that there were some vocabularies in this text that were inappropriate with the students because those were actually appropriate for higher level grade students. To make it worse, there were not found list of vocabularies in the text book that are hoped can help the students. As a result, it is a kind of barrier for the students in comprehending the text. This condition, is in line with Richard and Renandya (2002) point of view who stated :

"Vocabulary is a core component of language proficiency and provides much of the basis for how well leaners speak, listen, read and write. Without an extensive vocabulary and strategies for acquiring new vocabulary, learners often achieving less than their potential and may be discouraged from making use of language learning opportunities around them such as listening to radio, listening native speakers, using the language in different context, reading or watching t.v."

So, due to having limited vocabulary, it is hard for the students to comprehend the text and it is one of the factor that cause the readability problem.

Second, there are three texts (2,3 and 5) that are categorized appropriate with the students' grade level. It implies that if those texts are given to the XI grade students, they should be able to comprehend the texts properly. It is in line with the finding of Moladoost's research (2014). He found that there is a positive relationship between reading text readability with the students' reading comprehension level. Compared with the findings, the range of the students' and the teachers' perception towards those texts is easy and moderate. Most of the students stated that those texts are categorized moderate and even especially for the text 3, 6 among the 9 students stated that this text is categorized easy.

The last one is, there is 1 text (text 6) which is categorized difficult for the students since the text is appropriate for graduate students. Surprisingly, referring to the students' and the teachers' perception, this text is categorized moderate. It means that the students did not think this text as a difficult one to comprehend. It can be seen from the questionnaire result where the score of the readability sub factors range from very good and excellent. When this result is compared with the interview, there were 6 among 9 students stated this text as moderate and there was 1 student stated this text as easy. This perception is in line with both teachers who mentioned this text as moderate. The arguments that are stated by the students to support their claim are vocabularies familiarity, topic enggagement, and appropriate grammar usage.

Related to vocabularies familiarity, most students explained that most of the vocabularies in the text are well recognized by them. It is very helpful for the students in comprehending the text so that they felt this text is moderate. It is in line with Liu and Nation's statement (cited in Sari, 2015) which stated that the number of lexical items in a text is about 1 word from 20 words. In other words, if a text consist of 100 words, the unknown lexical items are not more than 5 words. In addition, Burton (in Permata sari et.al,2015) stated that a reader can not do well in comprehension without having a large of vocabulary. So, if a reader wants to comprehend a text, he/she must have an adequate vocabulary.

Based on background knowledge factor, text 6, referring to the questionnaire and interview, had good score and it is known very well by the majority of students. It indicates that the students have proportional knowledge about the topic. This knowledge is very helpful for the students to identify what the text is about and what the text is discussing. Sari (2015) in her research found that there was 1 text (text 2), based on background knowledge factor, which had good score of readability based on the students' perception since the students had proportional knowledge about the topic of the text. Conversely, there was also 1 text (text 5) had poor score of readability because the students did not have knowledge about the topic and they were not interested in the topic.

Furthermore, related to syntactic approriateness factor, there are three sub indicators that are formulated; namely grammatical construction, syntactic complexity and complex grammatical construction familiarity. All of the sub indicators had good score according to the result of the questionnaire. Meanwhile, referring to the interview result, it is found that eventhough there are some compound sentences found in the text, most the students claimed that most of those compound sentences are approriate with their reading grade level and their teachers had given knowledge about the grammar usage before teaching reading. As a result, those are not a great barrier for them in comprehending the text. This condition is supported by Shanahan (2013) who mentioned that there are two aspects that have significant influence towards the students'comprehension in reading comprehension. Those are vocabulary background knowledge and grammar complexity knowledge. The more students master vocabulary and grammar, the better comprehension the students would have.

Conclusion

Based on the investigation that has been done to the reading texts, the students and the teachers of SMAN 1 Bukittinggi who have learned and taught the English reading texts, it was found that first, the readability of some texts used by the students grade XI of SMAN 1Bukittinggi is not appropriate with the grade level of the students. It means that those texts had poor readability. There are three of six texts used which are not appropriate to the XI grade students where one of them is categorized as difficult since it is appropriate for college or university students. Meanwhile, the two other texts are categorized as easy for XI grade students because those texts are actually appropriate for students in grade 8th-9th.

Second, based on the students' perception, there are two texts that are categorized easy, three texts are categorized moderate and one text is categorized difficult. There are some factors that cause the barrier to comprehending the text among the students. It begins with a lack of vocabulary, lack of knowledge about syntactic complexity, and the length of the text which is not unfair. Third, according to the teachers' perception, there are five texts which are categorized moderate for the students. Meanwhile, there is one text in which both teachers disagree with where the first teacher mentioned that the text is moderate while the second one stated the text difficult for the students so that the students have a problem in comprehending the text.

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